

»» TABLE OF CONTENTS

Woodland (306). Iroquois (307). Central Woodland (307). North Pacific Coast (308). Other areas (309). Myth motifs (310).

CHAPTER III. THE TRICKSTER CYCLE 319

Central Woodland (320). Plains (321). Plateau (324). North Pacific Coast (325).

CHAPTER IV. TEST AND HERO TALES 329

North Pacific Coast (329). Central Woodland (333). Iroquois (334). California (335). Plains (335). Southwest (338). Test-theme motifs (339).

CHAPTER V. JOURNEYS TO THE OTHER WORLD 345

CHAPTER VI. ANIMAL WIVES AND HUSBANDS 353

CHAPTER VII. MISCELLANEOUS AMERICAN INDIAN TALES 359

PART FOUR

Studying the Folktale

CHAPTER I. THEORIES OF THE FOLKTALE 367

CHAPTER II. INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF FOLK-
TALE STUDY 391

CHAPTER III. COLLECTING FOLKTALES 406

CHAPTER IV. CLASSIFYING FOLK NARRATIVE 413

CHAPTER V. THE LIFE HISTORY OF A FOLKTALE 428

CHAPTER VI. THE FOLKTALE AS LIVING ART 449

APPENDIX A. IMPORTANT WORKS ON THE FOLKTALE 463

APPENDIX B. PRINCIPAL COLLECTIONS OF FOLKTALES 467

INDEX OF TALE TYPES 481

INDEX OF MOTIFS 488

GENERAL INDEX 501

THEORIES OF THE FOLKTALE

OUR rapid review of folk narrative in various parts of the world and in different cultural levels makes certain facts in regard to this material clear enough. No one will doubt that we are dealing everywhere with essentially the same human activity, and that the interest in a story is practically universal. Moreover the actual subject matter of folktales shows many striking resemblances from age to age and from land to land. And although the patterns differ somewhat, there is a tendency for the tales to range themselves into certain well-recognized formal groups, depending on style, purpose, or occasion for which they are used.

The attempt to understand such obvious facts as these confronts the student of the folktale with his most challenging problems. Assiduous collecting of stories throughout the world and skillful analyzing and cataloguing make the material to be explained more and more accessible and capable of study. Besides the mere description of it, however, the scholar is interested in explaining it. He wants to know not only *what* but *how* and *why*.

For more than a century the folktale has engaged the attention of a number of keen thinkers, so that in that time a considerable body of theoretical discussion has been written. It will be noted that these men are not all treating the same problems and that what most interests one may enter but slightly into the speculations of another. Before examining these theories, therefore, it may be well to suggest a few of the general questions concerning the tale, so that the whole subject can be kept in mind, even though only one aspect is being considered at the moment. These problems may be stated as follows:

1. *Origin of folktales.* How did the custom of telling stories begin and what is the origin of the particular tales we now have?
2. *Meaning of folktales.* Do tales mean just what they say, or do they have a hidden significance?

3. *Dissemination of folktales.* A study of tale collections shows clearly that many tales are widely distributed over the globe. What is the nature of this distribution, how did it occur, and why?

4. *Variations in folktales.* Each version of an oral folktale is different from any other. What is the nature and cause of these differences?

5. *Relation of different forms of the folktale: Märchen, myth, Sage, hero tale, and the like.*

Other questions are, of course, touched on but most of the discussion has concerned these five points. Usually a position assumed for one of these questions logically necessitates certain conclusions as to one or more of the others. It will help much, as we review some of these opinions, if the mutual relationship of all these problems is remembered.

The first serious consideration of any of these questions appeared in the second edition of the Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* in 1819. These scholars had apparently given little thought to the international aspect of folktales when they issued their first edition, but in the meantime similar tales had been published from other countries, especially Serbia, and had raised the whole question of how these resemblances and identical plots could be explained. The final statement of the theories of the Grimms was made by Wilhelm Grimm in 1856.¹

The resemblance existing between the stories not only of nations widely removed from each other by time and distance, but also between those which lie near together, consists partly in the underlying idea and the delineation of particular characters and partly in the weaving together and unraveling of incidents. There are, however, some situations which are so simple and natural that they reappear everywhere, just as there are thoughts which seem to present themselves of their own accord, so that it is quite possible that the same or very similar stories may have sprung up in the most different countries quite independently of each other. Such stories may be compared with the isolated words which are produced in nearly or entirely identical form in languages which have no connection with each other, by the mere imitation of natural sounds. We do meet with stories of this kind in which the resemblance can be attributed to accident, but in most cases the common root-thought will by the peculiar and frequently unexpected, nay, even arbitrary treatment, have received a form which quite precludes all acceptance of the idea of a merely apparent relationship. I will give some examples. Nothing can be more natural than to make the fulfilment of a request depend on the performance of some very difficult tasks; but when the tasks are the strangest imaginable, as they are in *The Peasant's Wise Daughter* (No. 94), and when moreover they coincide, this can no longer be a chance agreement. That in cases of difficulty an umpire should be called in, is a thing which is clear to all, but that in every place it is exactly three persons who are quarrelling, that

¹ *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Reklam, Leipzig, 1856), III, 427ff. Translation: Margaret Hunt, *Grimm's Household Tales* (London, 1884), II, 575ff.

they are beings endowed with higher powers, that it is an inheritance which is to be divided between them, that this should consist of three magic things, and that finally the man who is summoned to make the division should craftily cheat the owners out of them (a man must use the rare opportunities which present themselves if he wants to win away from the dwarfs or kobolds their magic treasures), proves the connection between the traditions. This common source is like a well, the depth of which no one knows but from which each draws according to his need.

I do not deny the possibility, nor in particular instances the probability, of a story's passing over from one people to another, and then firmly rooting itself on the foreign soil, for the *Siegfriedslied* penetrated to the most remote north in the very earliest time, and became indigenous there. But one or two solitary exceptions cannot explain the wide propagation of the property common to all; do not the selfsame stories crop up again in places most widely remote from each other, like a spring which forces its way up in spots which lie far apart? And just as wherever the eye can pierce we find the domestic animals, grain, fields, and kitchen-utensils, household-furniture, arms—in fact, all the things without which social life would be impossible—so do we also find sagas and stories—the dew which waters poetry—corresponding with each other in this striking and yet independent manner. They are just as much a necessity of existence as these things, for only where avarice and the jarring wheels of machinery benumb every other thought can anyone imagine it possible to live without them. Wherever assured and well-established order and usages prevail, wherever the connection between human sentiment and surrounding nature is felt, and the past is not torn asunder from the present, these stories are still to be found. I have picked up the best of these from peasants, and I know that this book has been read by them with the greatest delight, indeed I might say that it has been bought up by them, and that even Germans who have long been living far away from their fatherland in Pennsylvania have shown interest in it. May we not liken the sudden springing up of the Saga to the stream of a wandering tribe pouring itself into one uninhabited tract of land after another and filling it? How can we explain the fact of a story in a lonely mountain village in Hesse resembling one in India, Greece, or Servia?

[Many examples of motifs that have a common character and appear everywhere as common property.] Fragments of a belief dating back to the most ancient times, in which spiritual things are expressed in a figurative manner, are common to all stories. The mythic element resembles small pieces of a shattered jewel which are lying strewn on the ground all overgrown with grass and flowers, and can only be discovered by the most far-seeing eye. Their significance has long been lost, but it is still felt and imparts value to the story, while satisfying the natural pleasure in the wonderful. They are never the iridescence of an empty fancy. The farther we go back, the more the mythical element expands: indeed it seems to have formed the only subject of the oldest fictions. . . . In proportion as gentler and more humane manners develop themselves and the sensuous richness of fiction increases, the mythical element retires into the background and begins to shroud itself in

the mists of distance, which weaken the distinctness of the outlines but enhance the charm of the fiction.

We shall be asked where the outermost lines of common property in stories begin, and how the degrees of affinity are gradated. The outermost lines are coterminous with those of the great race which is commonly called Indo-Germanic, and the relationship draws itself in constantly narrowing circles round the settlements of the Germans, somewhat in the same ratio as that in which we detect the common or special property in the languages of the individual nations which belong to it. If we find among the Arabians some stories which are allied to the Germans, this may be explained by the fact the *Thousand and One Nights* where they appear, is derived from an Indian source, as Schlegel has justly maintained. However accurate the boundaries here given may be at present, it may be necessary to enlarge them if other sources become open to us, for we see with amazement in such of the stories of the Negroes of Bornu, and the Bechuanas (a wandering tribe in South Africa) as we have become acquainted with, an undeniable connection with the German ones, while at the same time their peculiar composition distinguishes them from these. On the other hand, I have found no such decided resemblance, at least no resemblance extending to mere trifles, in the North American stories. Tibetan stories exhibit some points of contact and so do Finnish; we see a visible relationship in the Indian and the Persian, and a decisive one in the Slav. . . . In the next place there is a very strong similarity between our stories and those of the Romance nations; this may be satisfactorily explained by the connection which has at all times existed between the two races and the intercourse which took place between them even at an early period. . . . It is my belief that our German stories do not belong to the Northern and Southern parts of our fatherland alone, but that they are the absolutely common property of the nearly-related Dutch, English, and Scandinavians. . . .

It will be seen that Grimm is here speaking of the folktale in a very general sense, not specifically of the wonder-story. He puts forward two ideas which were to secure general acceptance for a long time: (1) the circle of those tales which show close resemblances is coterminous with the Indo-European language family and these tales are doubtless inheritances from a common Indo-European antiquity; (2) the tales are broken-down myths and are to be understood only by a proper interpretation of the myths from which they came. These pronouncements give expression to what is generally known as (1) the Indo-European theory, (2) the broken-down myth theory.

He also suggests, but does not develop, certain other ideas which were later to be stressed by other scholars. Such are the "situations so simple and natural that they reappear everywhere," which he thinks not very common. He also admits borrowing from one people by another but feels that this is exceptional. These two principles were to become the foundations of folktale

scholarship a half century later, whereas Grimm's main contentions were gradually to lose the support of nearly all scholars.

Grimm's theory that the folktales with common incidents are primarily Indo-European was a natural result of the great interest in comparative philology in the early part of the nineteenth century. With the awareness of the importance of Sanskrit which came about toward the close of the eighteenth century, many European scholars interested themselves in the problem of reconstructing the parent speech from which descended most of the languages from India to Ireland.² Though many details remained unsolved, the general principles were rather clear by the middle of the nineteenth century, and the various subdivisions were well established. It was generally agreed that if there was a parent speech there must have been a unified group of people who used this speech, the primitive Indo-European stock. But where these people lived before they separated on their wanderings to India or Europe was a problem that these scholars—and, for that matter, later ones—failed to solve. Most of them seemed to feel that this original homeland was somewhere in western Asia and that it was in the highlands. They were at least sure that their Indo-European ancestors were shepherds.

The approach to this problem, which would seem to present-day scholars primarily a matter of archeological and ethnological investigation, was made exclusively through the study of comparative philology. The newly discovered relationship of words was for those men the key to unlock the mysteries of the past. In the *Rig-Veda* they could go back thirty-five hundred years—and that was far enough to give real indication as to the life of the Indo-Europeans. They did not take into consideration that the *Rig-Veda* was a Sanskrit work of a highly developed priesthood, who evidently delighted in expressing everything metaphorically. From this extraordinary work of the ancient priests of India, they proceeded to the theory that the original Indo-Europeans in their daily life used just such expressions with hidden meanings. And in this way had arisen the Indo-European myths and tales. Their real original meanings had become obscured if not lost, and it was the business of the scholar, through use of the *Rig-Veda* and his own philological skill, to restore these meanings.

Such was the goal of the students of "comparative mythology." In the course of a half century they evolved a system that grew ever more complex. Proceeding from a few major premises, which they seem to have found entirely by introspection, they built up a structure so fantastic that the modern reader who ventures to examine it begins to doubt his own sanity. The only way to give an idea of their work is to quote from some of the members of the school. Though they did not all agree in every detail, the

² For a good discussion of this movement see J. W. Spargo, *Linguistic Science in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1931).

general method will be seen well enough in the work of Max Müller, Angelo de Gubernatis, John Fiske, and Sir George Cox.³

The members of the school did not believe that the resemblances in folktales and myths come from borrowing. They were rather an inheritance from a common Indo-European past. "The real evidence," says Cox, "points only to that fountain of mythical language from which have flowed all the streams of Aryan epic poetry, streams so varied in their character yet agreeing so closely in their elements. The substantial identity of stories told in Italy, Norway, and India can but prove that the treasure-house of mythology was more abundantly filled before the dispersion of the Aryan tribes than we had taken it to be."

Andrew Lang's satirical summary of Cox's general theory does not make it more fantastic than does Cox's own verbose treatment⁴:

In the beginning of things, or as near the beginning as he can go, Sir George finds men characterised by "the selfishness and violence, the cruelty and slavishness of savages." Yet these cruel and violent savages had the most exquisitely poetical, tender, and sympathetic way of regarding the external world (Mythol. Ar. i. 39), "Deep is the tenderness with which they describe the deaths of the sun-stricken dew, the brief career of the short-lived sun, and the agony of the Earth-mother mourning for her summer child." Not only did early man cherish these passionate sympathies with the fortunes of the sun and the dew, but he cherished them almost to the exclusion of emotions perhaps more obvious and natural as we moderns hold. Man did not get used to the dawn; he was always afraid that the sun had sunk to rise no more, "years might pass, or ages, before his rising again would establish even the weakest analogy." Early man was apparently much more difficult to satisfy with analogies than modern mythologists are. After the sun had set and risen with his accustomed regularity, "perhaps for ages," "man would mourn for his death as for the loss of one who might never return."

While man was thus morbidly anxious for the welfare of the sun, and tearfully concerned about the misfortunes of the dew, he had, as we have seen, the moral qualities of the savage. He had also the intellectual confusion, the perplexed philosophy of the contemporary savage. Mr. Tylor, Mr. Im Thurn, Mr. Herbert Spencer, and most scientific writers on the subject, have observed that savages draw no hard and fast line between themselves and the animal or even the inanimate world. To the mind of the savage all things organic or inorganic appear to live and to be capable of conscious movement and even of speech. All the world is made in the savage's own image. Sir George Cox's early man was in this savage intellectual condition. "He had life, and therefore all things else must have life also. The sun, the moon, the stars, the ground on which he trod, the clouds, storms, and light-

³ Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop* (New York, 1881); Angelo de Gubernatis, *Zoological Mythology* (London, 1872); John Fiske, *Myths and Myth-Makers* (Boston, 1872), and Sir George Cox, *Mythology of the Aryan Nations* (London, 1870).

⁴ Lang in Margaret Hunt, *Grimm's Household Tales*, I, xx.

nings were all living beings: could he help thinking that, like himself, they were conscious beings also? . . ."

We now approach another influence on mythology, the influence of language. While man was in the condition of mind already described by Sir George Cox, he would use "a thousand phrases to describe the actions of the beneficent or consuming sun, of the gentle or awful night, of the playful or furious wind, and every word or phrase became the germ of a new story, *as soon as the mind* lost its hold on the original force of the name." Now the mind was always losing its hold on the original force of the name, and the result would be a constant metamorphosis of the remark made about a natural phenomenon, into a myth about something denoted by a term which had ceased to possess any meaning. These myths, caused by forgetfulness of the meaning of words (as we understand our author), were of the *secondary* class, and a third class came into existence through folk-etymologies, as they are called, popular guesses at the derivations of words. We have now briefly stated Sir George Cox's theory of the origins of myths, and of the mental condition and habits through which myths were evolved. But how does this theory explain the origin of Household Tales?

This question ought to lead us to our third problem, what are the relations of Household Tales to the higher mythologies? But it may suffice to say here that in Sir George Cox's opinion, most of the Household Tales are, in origin, myths of the phenomena of day and night.

Some of the applications of these theories we may well see from quotations from Angelo de Gubernatis' *Zoölogical Mythology*.

The aurora, as the first of those who appear every day in the eastern sky, as the first to know the break of day, is naturally represented as one of the swiftest among those who are the guests of the sun-prince during the night; and like her cows, which do not cover themselves with dust (this being an attribute which, in the Indian faith, distinguishes the gods from mortals, for the former walk in the heavens, and the latter upon earth), she, in her onward flight, leaves no footsteps behind her. The word *apād* (*pad* and *pada*, being synonymous) may, indeed, mean not only she who has no feet, but also she who has no footsteps (that is, what is the measure of the foot), or, again, she who has no slippers, the aurora having, as appears, lost them; for the prince Mitras, while following the beautiful young girl, finds a slipper which shows her footstep, the measure of her foot, a foot so small, that no other woman has a foot like it, an almost unfindable, almost imperceptible foot, which brings us back again to the idea of her who has no feet. The legend of the lost slipper, and of the prince who tried to find the foot predestined to wear it, the central interest in the popular story of Cinderella, seems to me to repose entirely upon the double meaning of the word *apād*, *i.e.*, who has no feet, or what is the measure of the foot, which may be either the footstep or the slipper; often, moreover, in the story of Cinderella, the prince cannot overtake the fugitive, because a chariot bears her away. . . . (I, 30 f.)

The same phenomenon, a divorce of husband from wife, or a separation of

brother and sister, or the flight of a sister from her brother, or again, that of a daughter from her father, presents itself twice every day (and every year) in the sky. Sometimes, on the other hand, it is a witch, or the monster of nocturnal darkness, who takes the place of the radiant bride, or the aurora, near the sun; and in that case the aurora, the beauteous bride, is spirited away into a wood to be killed or thrown into the sea, from both of which predicaments, however, she always escapes. Sometimes the witch of night throws the brother and sister, the mother and son, the sun and the aurora, together into the waves of the sea, whence they both escape again, to reappear in the morning. . . . (I, 40)

The aurora is a cow; this cow has horns; her horns are radiant and golden. When the cow aurora comes forth, all that falls from her horns brings good luck; . . . (I, 51)

The aurora who possesses the pearl becomes she who is rich in pearls, and herself a source of pearls; but the pearl, as we have already seen, is not only the sun, it is also the moon. The moon is the friend of the aurora; she comforts her in the evening under her persecutions; she loads her with presents during the night, accompanies and guides her, and helps her to find her husband. . . . (I, 55 f.)

As the genealogy of the gods and heroes is infinite, so is there an infinite number of forms assumed by the same myth and of the names assumed by the same hero. Each day gave birth in the heavens to a new hero and a new monster, who exterminate each other, and afterwards revive in an aspect more or less glorious, according as their names were more or less fortunate. It is for the same reason that the sons always recognize their fathers without having once seen them or even heard them spoken of; they recognise themselves in their fathers. . . . (I, 83 f.)

The solar hero comes out of his difficulties and triumphs over his enemies, not only by force of arms, but by his innate strength and prowess. This extraordinary strength, by which he is borne along, and which renders him irresistible, is the wind. . . . (I, 105)

The girl who has been married to a monster, whom she flees from to follow a handsome young lover, who arriving at the banks of a river, despoils her of her riches, leaves her naked and passes over to the other side, after which she resigns herself to her fate and resolves to return to her husband the monster, represents the evening aurora, who flees before the monster of night to follow her lover the sun, who, in the morning, after adorning himself with her splendour, leaves her on the shore of the gloomy ocean and runs away, the aurora being thereupon obliged in the evening to re-unite herself to her husband the monster (I, 122).

Gubernatis makes some interesting if absurd interpretations of particular folktales. The first is Type 1540, the joke about the student who tells a woman that he comes from Paris. She understands him to say "Paradise" and gives him money and goods to give to her husband. Gubernatis bases his discussion on the Kalmuck version in *Siddhi-Kür*.

Another beautiful myth of analogous import occurs again in the eighth story. A woodman and a painter envy each other; the painter makes the king believe that the woodman's father, who is in heaven, has written ordering his son to repair to paradise, in order to build him a temple, and to take the route that the painter shall indicate. The king orders the woodman to set out for paradise. The painter prepares a funeral pyre, by way of exit; from this the woodman succeeds in escaping, and going back to the king, he tells him that he has been to paradise, and presents a letter which his father has given him, ordering the painter to come by the same road, and paint the temple. The king requires the summons to be obeyed, and the perfidious painter perishes in the flames. The morning sun emerges safe and sound from the flames of the morning aurora; the evening sun passes through those flames, and dies (I, 130).

It would seem that the absurdities of such interpretations should have been sufficiently obvious to their inventors. But two generations of scholars vied with one another in spinning fancies of this kind. It was only in the 1870's that common sense began to assert itself. The trenchant wit of Andrew Lang made clear enough to everyone the ridiculous conclusions of the mythological school. In a more serious vein he sums up his conclusions thus⁵:

On the whole, then, the student of *Märchen* must avoid two common errors. He must not regard modern interpolations as part of the mythical essence of a story. He must not hurry to explain every incident as a reference to the natural phenomena of Dawn, Sunset, Wind, Storm, and the like. The points which are so commonly interpreted thus, are sometimes modern interpolations; more frequently they are relics of ancient customs of which the mythologist never heard, or survivals from an archaic mental condition into which he has never inquired.

Though some teachers of Greek and Latin mythology in the schools still tell their students the "interpretations" which their teachers had in turn learned from *their* teachers of the 1870's, the general absurdity of the whole doctrine has long been recognized by all serious scholars in the field. This change of opinion is due not only to this devastating criticism of Lang but also to certain other satirical attacks. Among the latter the best known is Gaidoz's *jeu d'esprit*, "Comme quoi M. Max Müller n'a jamais existé: étude de mythologie comparée,"⁶ in which, by using the approved methods of comparative mythology he disposes of the great scholar Max Müller, and shows that he himself is nothing but a myth.

While one school of research was exploring the *Rig-Veda* and its influence on the folktale, another, which entirely rejected both the general Indo-European and the mythological theories, was also, from another point of

⁵ *Op. cit.*, I, xviii.

⁶ *Mélusine*, II, 73.

view, finding India the fountainhead of folktale tradition. The leader of this school was Theodor Benfey.

As early as 1838 Loiseleur Deslongchamps⁷ had suggested that the originals of the European folktales were probably to be found in India, but it was Benfey who took this suggestion and advanced it to a dogma. Though in several of his earlier studies he had put forward this idea, it was expressed with especial clearness and authority in the Introduction to his edition of the *Panchatantra* in 1859. This doctrine was so important for the scholarship of the next two generations that it calls for a translation of the whole passage.⁸

As far as the sources and the dissemination of the stories contained in the *Panchatantra* are concerned, it is clear that in general most of the animal fables originated in the occident and are in greater or less degree transformations of the so-called Aesop fables. Nevertheless, some of them give the impression of having an origin in India, for as in the case of the great mass of Indic stories as a whole, the freedom with which the borrowed material has been handled as well as many other considerations indicate that the Hindus, even before their acquaintance with the animal fables of Aesop which they received from the Greeks, had invented their own compositions of a similar kind, and a great many of them at that. The difference between their conceptions and those of the Aesop fables consisted in general in the fact that whereas the Aesopic writer had his animals act in accordance with their own characteristics, the Indic fable treated the animals without regard to their special nature, as if they were merely men masked in animal form. Furthermore, to these may be added, for one thing, the essentially—and in India exclusively—didactic nature of the animal fable, and for another the prevalent Hindu belief in the transmigration of souls.

Folktales on the other hand, and especially *Märchen* show that they were originally from India; and, what is still more important, it is with these tales that the Hindus—although in a large measure only at a later time—have, so to speak, paid back over and over again the debt incurred by the borrowing of the animal tales from the Occident. My investigations in the field of fables, *Märchen*, and tales of the Orient and Occident have brought me to the conviction that few fables, but a great number of *Märchen* and other folktales have spread outward from India almost over the entire world. As far as the time of this dissemination is concerned, comparatively few had wandered toward the west before about the tenth century after Christ, and these (except for the stories made known through translations of the groundwork of the *Panchatantra* or *Kalilah and Dimnah*) only through oral tradition occasioned by the meeting of travelers, merchants, and the like.

With the tenth century, however, there began with the continued attacks and conquests of the Islamites in India an ever-increasing acquaintance with India. From that point on the oral tradition became less important than the

⁷ *Essai sur les fables indiennes* (Paris, 1838).

⁸ T. Benfey, *Pantschatantra: Fünf Bücher indischer Fabeln, Märchen, und Erzählungen* (2 vols., Leipzig, 1859).

written. The narrative works of India were now translated into Persian and Arabic, and sometimes the works themselves and sometimes only the contents were scattered in a relatively short time over the realm of the Islamites in Asia, Africa, and Europe, and, because of the frequent intercourse of these peoples with Christians, also throughout the Christian Occident. In the latter respect the chief points of contact were the Byzantine Empire, Italy, and Spain.

In still greater numbers and in part even earlier, the already mentioned three classes of Hindu compositions spread to those districts to the east and north of India. From our investigations comes a conviction that these compositions found their principal expression in Buddhist literature. With this literature, from about the first century after Christ, as long as China remained in close contact with Buddhist India, they penetrated without interruption into China, and the striking discovery of Stan. Julian, which we have already mentioned, shows that the Chinese feel a strong sympathy for just this side of Buddhism and considered it worth their while to make special collections of the various compositions found in the Buddhist traditions.

In the same way as they had spread to China they also reached Tibet. As long as the latter received its religious concepts from China, these came from China, but after Tibet was in immediate contact with India they came from India.

From the Tibetans they finally came along with Buddhism to the Mongols, and of these people we know with the utmost certainty that they took over the tales of India into their own language—to be sure, with many changes and modifications, concerning the details of which we cannot yet give any more definite account. In addition to the Mongolian reworking of the *Vetalapanchavimcati*, and of the *Vikramacharitra*, it may be remarked that it has become certain that the third tale collection, the *Sukasaptati*, was also familiar to the Mongols. Now, the Mongols for almost two hundred years were in power in Europe and in this way opened up a wide gate for the intrusion of Indic conceptions into Europe.

Thus it is on the one hand the Islamites, and on the other the Buddhists who have brought about the diffusion of the folktales of India over almost the whole world. But how easily such compositions spread abroad, with what pleasure and passion they are heard and repeated, everyone knows from his own experience. . . . Because of their inner excellence the tales from India seem to have absorbed whatever similar ideas already existed among the various people to whom they came. Individual traits, however, could hardly have been preserved in the rapid adaptations of material of such alien nationality. For the transformations which tales experience, especially as they are disseminated orally, are, aside from an adaptation to a different nationality, almost entirely a kaleidoscopic confusion of forms, traits, and motifs which were originally separated. To the same cause is due their great numbers; though this is, as a matter of fact, only apparent, for in reality the great mass of them, especially the European folktales, reduce themselves to a by no means considerable number of fundamental forms, out of which with greater or less luck and skill they have been multiplied, through the activity partly of the folk and partly of individuals.

The literary vehicle was primarily the *Tuti Nameh*, Arabic, and very probably Jewish writings. Alongside of these ran oral traditions, especially in the Slavic lands. In the literature of Europe the narratives appear above all in Boccaccio, the *Märchen* in Straparola. From literature they were taken over by the people, and having been changed by them they went again into literature, again to the folk, etc. and assumed, especially because of this alternate activity of national and individual spirit, that character of national truth and individual unity which gives to not a few of them such great poetic value.

This point of view concerning the origin and history of concepts of this kind, which are found outside India among cultivated peoples or among those who are in closest contact with them, is a question of fact which will not receive its full settlement until all or at least the greater part of these conceptions are traced back to their source in India. This work is only begun in the following Introduction; by far the greater part of my results will appear in further investigations which will be devoted to the editing and investigating the other narrative collections of India. As everyone will realize, these studies necessitate a multitude of comparisons and not seldom a consideration of dry details of development. These, however, will be enlivened or at least be made readable because of the mixing in of many unknown or little known tales and *Märchen*. Nevertheless, I feel that I can hardly hope to reach my goal—namely, the winning of a wider circle to my opinion—unless I encounter a certain measure of good will on the part of my readers. Perhaps this may be accorded me more readily if it is remembered that the introduction of these cheerful conceptions into the midst of, and in opposition to, the ascetic direction of the Middle Ages was by no means of small importance. Their sensuality, even if occasionally somewhat lascivious, helped not a little to bring literature back to its straight path, that is, to nature, so that almost immediately after their reception in Europe they resulted in Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Don Manuel's *Conde Lucanor*—those flowerings of medieval prose which still stand almost unrivaled in Italy and Spain. Finally, it is the *Märchen* we have spoken of which create the inexhaustible, ever-bubbling fountain at which all the people, high and low, but especially those who have no other springs of spiritual enjoyment, continually refresh themselves anew.

Benfey thus sees the origin of folktales, except the Aesop fables, in India, and thinks the spread westward had taken place through three channels: (1) a certain number by oral tradition before the tenth century; (2) after the tenth century by literary tradition along the lines of Islamic influence, particularly through Byzantium, Italy, and Spain; (3) Buddhistic material through China and Tibet (or directly) to the Mongols and from them to Europe. Important as literary vehicles were the Persian *Tuti Nameh*, Arabic, and probably Jewish writings. Oral tradition also assisted in spreading the tales, especially in Slavic countries.

The elaborate comparative notes made by Benfey for each of the stories in the *Panchatantra* gave convincing scholarly weight to his opinions and for at least a generation directed the research of many folktale scholars into

the channels he had indicated. A period of intensive comparative studies of tale collections began, which resulted in the real beginning of the structure of modern folktale scholarship. The underlying hypothesis of these studies posited India as the fountain from which the European tales had all flowed, but whether their labors actually pointed to that conclusion or not, the vast collections of analogues brought together under this stimulus was a permanent gain.

After Benfey himself the most important scholar engaged in such researches was Reinhold Köhler, Librarian of the Ducal Library at Weimar. For many years he published annotations of the chief collections of European tales as they appeared⁹ and more and more, through the accumulation of these facts, the mutual relationship of the various tales and motifs were clarified. These studies did not by any means all lead back to India, and though they established India's importance for European tales, they also showed that Benfey had overstated his case.

Köhler was primarily an annotator and appears not to have concerned himself much about general theories as to the origin of European tales. Much more of a real proponent of Benfey's basic ideas was Emmanuel Cosquin, who published a distinguished series of monographs over a period of thirty years beginning around 1890.¹⁰ He studied scores of tales and motifs, always with emphasis on the relation to analogues from India, which he was convinced represented the source. His studies usually do not consider a sufficient number of versions of the tales in question to arrive at a real conclusion, but they indicate a remarkable advance in our knowledge of many stories, and they furnish a foundation for more definitive work by future scholars.

Cosquin modified the Benfey theory in two respects. He became convinced that Benfey was mistaken as to the important role he had assigned the Mongols in the dissemination of stories over Europe. He was also impressed by collections of Egyptian folktales which were too early for the borrowing from India as described by Benfey. India may not have originated all the tales, thought Cosquin, but it has nevertheless served as the great reservoir into which tales of diverse origins have flowed and from which they flow out in turn over the earth.

The Indianist theory of Benfey is not utterly dead today, but with the passing of Cosquin in 1921 it lost its last apologist. Most modern folktale scholars are convinced that India was important as a source of many stories, but that it was only one of several great centers of invention and dissemination.

To this Indianist theory as well as to the mythological theory Andrew

⁹ These were assembled and edited by Johannes Bolte under the title of *Kleinere Schriften*.

¹⁰ These are to be found for the most part in *Revue des traditions populaires*. Two collections of these studies are: *Etudes folkloriques* and *Contes indiens*. See also the notes to his *Contes populaires de Lorraine*.

Lang was perhaps the most skillful opponent. He began pointing out the significance in the light of this theory of the discovery of the Egyptian folktales dating from the thirteenth century B.C., as well as of the tales mentioned in Herodotus and Homer. These facts made Lang disbelieve in the primary importance of India for the history of the tale.

As for his positive ideas about the origin of tales, he called attention to the many primitive ideas in modern folktales and put forward the opinion that the presence of these traits showed that the tales are survivals from a very ancient time. It is often said that Lang was a believer in "polygenesis," or the theory that resemblances in stories are due to independent invention in many places, since they are made up of beliefs, customs, etc. which are common to peoples of the same stages of culture. This position has then been criticized because it is based on the presupposition of a parallel development of culture everywhere, a parallelism which would manifest itself in analogous tales. Though it is possible to find adherents of such an extreme doctrine of "polygenesis," it is certain that Lang did not believe in it.

Lang was, indeed, so eminently reasonable in his attitude that the summary of his conclusions gives expression, perhaps better than in any other way to the position folktale scholarship had reached by the end of the nineteenth century, and from which, with only slight modifications, it has moved on into the twentieth. This statement deserves quoting at some length.¹¹

Coming from childhood into the light of common day, I found certain theories of popular tales chiefly current. They were regarded as the *detritus* of Myths, the last echo of stories of Gods and Heroes, surviving among the people. These myths, again, were explained, by the schools of Schwartz, Kuhn, Max Müller, as myths either of storm, thunder, and lightning, or of the Sun and Dawn. Further, the myths, and also the tales, were believed to be essentially and exclusively Aryan, parts of the common Aryan heritage, brought from the cradle of the Aryan race. The solar and the elemental theories of the origin of myths, and of their *detritus*, popular tales, did not convince me. The linguistic processes by which words and phrases of forgotten meaning developed into the myths, did not seem to me to be satisfactory solutions. I observed that tales similar to the Aryan in incident and plot existed in non-Aryan countries—Africa, Samoa, New Guinea, North and Central America, Finland, among the Samoyed, and so forth. As it was then denied that tales were lent and borrowed, from people to people, I looked for an explanation of the similarities. The same stories were not likely to be evolved among peoples who did, and people who did not, speak an Aryan language, if language misunderstood was the source of tales. I also reached the conclusion that, when similar incidents and plot occurred in a Greek heroic myth (say the Argonautic Legend or the *Odyssey*) and in popular tales current in Finland, Samoa, Zululand, the tales are not the *detritus* of the heroic myth, but the epic legend, as of Jason or Odysseus, is an artistic and literary modification

¹¹ Introduction to Cox, *Cinderella*, pp. xi ff.

of the more ancient tale. The characters of the *tale* are usually anonymous, and the places are vague and nameless. The characters of the *epic* are named, they are national heroes; the events are localised; they occur in Greece, Colchis, and so forth. So I concluded that the *donnée* was ancient and popular, the epic was comparatively recent and artistic. Next I observed that the tales generally contained, while the epics usually discarded, many barbaric incidents, such as cannibalism, magic, talking animals. Further, I perceived that the tales varied in "culture" with the civilisation of the people who told them. Among savages, say Bushmen, or in a higher grade Zulus, the characters were far more frequently *animals* than in European *märchen*. The girl who answers to Medea is not the daughter of a wizard king, but the wife of an elephant. The same peculiarity marks savage religious myths. The gods are beasts or birds. These facts led me to suppose that the tales were very ancient, and had been handed down, with a gradual refining, from ages of savagery to ages of civilisation. But the peasant class which retains the tales has been so conservative and unaltered, that many of the wilder features of the original tale (discarded in early artistic and national epic) linger on in *Märchen*. Thus, in most peasant versions of the *Cinderella* theme, the wonder-working character is a beast, a sheep in Scotland; sometimes that beast has been the heroine's mother. In our usual *Cinderella*, derived from Perrault's version (1697), the wonder-working character is a fairy godmother. Thus I seemed to detect a process of genealogy like this:

Original Tale, probably of Savage Origin

Popular Tale of Peasants

Ancient Literary Heroic
Myth (Homer, Cyclic
Poems, *Argonautica*, Lays
of Sigurd, *Nibelungenlied*,
Perseus Myth, etc.)

Modern Literary
Version (Perrault)

Discovering an apparent process of refinement and elaboration, and behind that ideas very barbaric, I examined the more peculiar incidents of popular tales. Talking beasts are common, beasts acting as men are common: no less common, among savages, is the frame of mind in which practically no distinction is taken between gods, beasts, and men. The more barbaric the people, the more this lack of distinction marks their usages, ritual, myth, and tales. Of magic and cannibalism it is needless to speak. The more civilised the people, the less of these elements appears in their ritual, usage, and myth: most survives in their popular tales, and even in these it is gradually mitigated. My conclusion was that the tales dated from an age of savage fancy. . . .

I have frequently shown the many ways in which a tale, once conceived, might be diffused or transmitted. . . . On the other hand, I have frequently said that, given a similar state of taste and fancy, similar beliefs, similar cir-

cumstances, a *similar* tale might conceivably be independently evolved in regions remote from each other. We know that similar patterns, similar art (compare Aztec and Mycenaean pottery in the British Museum), have thus been independently evolved; so have similar cosmic myths, similar fables, similar riddles, similar proverbs, similar customs and institutions.

The interest which Lang had in primitive man is natural because of the remarkable work done by the English school of anthropologists during the second half of the nineteenth century. Under the leadership of E. B. Tylor the study of primitive peoples had come to occupy the attention of a very able group of scholars who began to investigate special aspects of human behavior in the light of the accumulating mass of data being reported from all over the world. The concept of organic evolution in the realm of biology was still but new and had not worked itself properly into the general thinking of scholars. Where it was accepted at all, it was likely to be applied too far.

All sorts of illogical practices and beliefs were found over the world not only among primitive peoples but among the most enlightened, and these were brought together and compared. In such a work as Frazer's twelve-volume *Golden Bough* a remarkable collection of these data are displayed in a logical sequence that seems to present a picture of the thinking and acting of man in his more primitive stages. But remarkable as the assemblage of material is, the conclusions to be drawn are not nearly so certain as Frazer indicates. Story motifs, practices, and beliefs are shown which are practically identical among the American Indians, the natives of Australia, and those of South Africa. The assumption is that all peoples have gone through the same stages of culture in a direct line of evolution and that in each stage they react to the world and express themselves in the same way. In higher stages there may be survivals of the earlier stages. Thus among European peasants many illogical things are found that go back to a time when they were objects of belief or actual practice.

These two theories, namely, of the direct and parallel evolution of cultures and of survivals in culture, caused such folklorists as MacCulloch¹² to study folktales primarily as products of primitive culture and as filled with motifs going back to a remote period in Europe and Asia when they were believed; and they assembled parallels among primitive peoples. The findings of such scholars as Frazer and MacCulloch are of the utmost interest, but they overlook two considerations, so important as to take away much of the value of their work. One is that culture is a matter of historical development for each people, and is subjected to all sorts of special influences internal and external, so that except in the vaguest and most general sense, parallelism between differing ones, especially if they are far removed, is an unjustified assumption.

¹² *The Childhood of Fiction* (London, 1905).

Such studies also underestimate the role which diffusion of the elements of tribal life has played, and they pay scant attention to the great community of interest among peoples within particular "culture areas."

In their studies of the folktale, the English anthropologists had the virtue of catholicity of interest. They concerned themselves with all sorts of motifs common to European tales and those of primitive peoples and they were sensible of the fact that many tales belonged to particular areas and had limited distribution. But the dissemination of complete tale types, and consequently of all the component motifs, seemed to them not nearly so significant as the establishing of the primitive nature of the motifs themselves.

This interest in the motifs, rather than in complete tales, is, in fact, characteristic of all those scholars who seek to find some general principle by which to explain the origin of tale-telling as a human activity. The motifs are simple and it is therefore much easier to make simple explanations of them than if one has to explain a whole tale which consists of a complex of motifs. The same simple motif may arise independently in different places, or it may be carried from place to place. It is therefore possible to assemble hundreds or even thousands of instances of the same motif from all parts of the earth, and this fact has been used by scholars to establish the most diverse and mutually exclusive explanations of the origin of tale-telling. Each group has interested itself in particular kinds of material and the scholars representing each have usually neglected everything that does not fit itself into their theories.

The Indo-European mythological method of explaining the origin of stories and myths was generally discredited by the end of the nineteenth century, but it did not put an end to the use of similar reasoning on the part of certain anthropologists who now adapted it to the tales of the whole world. It was early applied to American Indian myths by Brinton, who saw sun gods in the Iroquois and Ojibwa heroes.¹³ A whole school of writers¹⁴ has engaged in the study of "comparative mythology" which attempts to show that mythological stories (and this seems to mean practically all folktales) of all peoples are essentially the same because these stories are saying exactly the same things, though in diverse ways. The most complete exposition of this theory is perhaps that of Ehrenreich.¹⁵

This scholar agrees that folktales have been disseminated from certain centers, but he feels that even a complete understanding of such dissemination is only the beginning of the scholar's real task. For a full understanding of the tales scattered over the globe we need to examine the "inner relationship,"

¹³ D. G. Brinton, *American Hero Myths* (Philadelphia, 1882), *Myths of the New World* (New York and London, 1868), *passim*.

¹⁴ A good idea of their work can be had from the files of *Mythologische Bibliothek* (Leipzig, 1907-1916).

¹⁵ Paul Ehrenreich, *Die allgemeine Mythologie und ihre ethnologischen Grundlagen* (Leipzig, 1910).

that is the *meaning* of the contents. "Every natural phenomenon," he says,¹⁶ "produces by psychological necessity definite forms of expression which arise in part from apperception and in part from association." Thus the observation of the eclipse of the sun by the moon may, through association and analogy, find expression in a number of ways; for example (1) the swallowing of a hero; (2) the hero's fight with a monster; (3) jumping of the moon-being into a fire-pit (a bath of rejuvenation, etc.); (4) being cooked in a vessel (the last visible crescent of the moon is conceived of as a vessel); (5) copulation (incest of the sun and the moon). In other places Ehrenreich finds the crescent moon to be a snake. The waxing and waning of the moon, he asserts, may suggest the following—and many other—motifs: (1) blackening (of some person or animal); (2) three-day hiding or absence; (3) cutting off a head with a sickle; (4) substitutions; (5) disguises. Ehrenreich says that his study is based upon the "undeniable" parallel development of all cultures. The same natural phenomena must produce the same mythical expression, and hence there is a myth-making process subject to definite laws.

For a study of this kind one needs the simplest and most transparent form of the myth, a form which Ehrenreich calls the *naturmythologisches Märchen*. "These primary forms, or *Urmären*, relate simply what is seen and in a fanciful manner bring detailed points of the impressions and appearances into causal relationship through human likenesses." From this first stage the development is by definite psychological laws (mainly association) working irrespective of time and place, not merely on the gifted individual but on the mass of people.

The most important of those natural phenomena which form a common basis for ideas all over the world are the sun, the moon, certain stars and constellations. Of these Ehrenreich considers the moon most important.

This "astral" mythology can, of course, be nothing more than a hypothesis to explain striking analogues in tales. But it is never stated as a simple hypothesis. Like the weather-mythology of Müller and Gubernatis, it depends on assumptions that are never proved. We have no assurance, nor does it even seem likely, that most primitive peoples really concern themselves much with the heavenly bodies. The analogies between actual motifs and these astral phenomena are based on the most tenuous suggestions and are probably not valid even for one people, though they are stated as dogmas and applied to the whole world.

Another school of mythologists and folklorists is particularly impressed with the prevalence of certain patterns of thought in widely separated places. Examples of such concepts are twin heroes or twin gods who go on adventures together. In his *Cult of the Heavenly Twins* and his *Boanerges*¹⁷

¹⁶ P. 34.

¹⁷ Cambridge [England], 1906, 1913.

Rendel Harris studies such story cycles and thinks he finds in these elementary concepts the key that unlocks all the difficulties of myth and folktale.

This method of study shows the same weaknesses in the field of folk narrative as Frazer's *Golden Bough* in the larger world of custom and belief. Resemblances from far and near are assembled without adequate consideration of the probability or improbability of their being actually connected in human tradition. Intermediate peoples without these concepts are disregarded, so that no rational conclusions as to the actual relation between two similar but widely separated motifs can be reached.

Any careful student of such incidents soon learns that logical relationship does not necessitate organic connection and that identical simple ideas arise over and over. It is not necessary to strain for an explanation either by proposing dubious routes of diffusion or by asserting a mystical theory by which all men through a necessity of some kind make up tales of twin gods. If men tell tales at all they must sometimes hit upon the same motifs. And no copyright office even today prevents this.

The value of scholars of the type of Harris and Frazer consists primarily in their bringing to our attention a huge number of interesting similarities in narrative pattern. Even if we do not see the same significance in these resemblances which they do, we must at least realize that they have posed a large number of important questions for future students of comparative mythology and folklore.

Interest in the origin of many of the motifs of modern folktales as survivals from the life and experiences of primitive peoples was especially strong among anthropologists and folklorists of a generation ago. Obsolete customs and beliefs of all kinds and their appearance in European tales were studied not only by Lang, MacCulloch, and Hartland, but by such German scholars as Friedrich von der Leyen.¹⁸ The latter paid special attention to the likelihood that dreams originally gave rise to many of the incidents now found in folktales. This theory had been stated in extreme form by Ludwig Laistner in his *Das Rätsel der Sphinx*,¹⁹ where he held that dreams and their meaning were the clue for an understanding of all folktales, legends, and traditions. Von der Leyen recognizes that some ancient dreams may have brought about certain incidents—flight from ogres, attempts to perform impossible tasks and many others—but he is rightly sceptical of any wholesale application of the theory.

Laistner was most concerned with the dream of fear or distress. The Freudians have also done much "interpreting" of folktales as expression of dreams of suppressed desires. Neither of these groups have been realistic in their approach to the problem of folktale origins. With no knowledge of when or where or by whom a tale or an incident was first told they proceed

¹⁸ *Das Märchen* (3rd ed., Leipzig, 1925).

¹⁹ Berlin, 1889.

to dogmatize as to the exact circumstance that gave rise to it. Such speculations can be of little aid to an understanding of either the beginning or development of the folktale. At most their proponents point out mere possibilities, even though they usually assert them as established facts.²⁰

Another particular feature of primitive life has been stressed by Saintyves,²¹ who studies the well-known tales of Perrault's collection and thinks that he has discovered the ultimate origin of each. These eleven tales he arranges in three classes, but all of them, he is convinced, show their origin in some kind of ancient ritual. Saintyves is careful to show for each of the tales the absurdities of previous interpretations by the mythological school of folklorists, but the explanations which he substitutes have seemed to most judicious scholars to be not less fantastic than those he seeks to replace. Five of the tales (Red Ridinghood, Les fées, Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, and Cap o' Rushes), he says, have their origin in a ritual celebrating the seasons; four (Petit Poucet, Bluebeard, Riquet à la Houpe, and Puss in Boots) go back to initiation ceremonies; and in two (Patient Griselda and The Foolish Wishes) he sees the remains of medieval sermons.

The utilitarian character of tales, especially as they relate to the institution of totemism and totemistic rites is developed by Arnold van Gennep in his very important work *La formation des légendes*.²² Basing his findings on a wide knowledge of anthropology, particularly of the Australian natives, van Gennep attempts to arrive at some general conclusions about how tales are formed. He is entirely unimpressed with the explanations of the Ehrenreich school and in his discussion of legends of the heavenly bodies and the stars he points out what a small part such legends actually play in the tales of primitive peoples. Very important among all such tribes, however, are animal tales. These, he thinks, are of great interest to the tribe—because of the importance of totem animals and of rites connected with the totem. The recitation of myths and legends in primitive and ancient society was an indispensable rite. It was of practical importance in furthering the efficacy of the ceremony.

Primitive myths and tales, he contends, always taught a lesson of conduct or they were helpful to the tribe in bringing about ends which were desired. On the primitive level the same thing may be in one place a myth (which, according to van Gennep, is a tale having direct relation to a rite), a legend, or a tale. These are always localized and individualized; the unlocalized tale (*Märchen*) is a later development. From a utilitarian point of view, the genres of folktale proceed from myths and legends, which are of most practical value, to the fairy tales and novelle, which are of least. The legend may

²⁰ For examples of such speculations, see p. 99 f.

²¹ P. Saintyves [pseud. of É. Nourry], *Les contes de Perrault et les récits parallèles* (Paris, 1923), pp. xvii ff.

²² Paris, 1910.

explain a duty, the myth help with a rite. Intermediate are animal tales, and fables, which teach lessons.

Van Gennep's very illuminating discussion of the development of mythologies and heroic legends is well documented and does not depend on any theories of parallelism or any mystical interpretations of heavenly phenomena. It recognizes the cosmological significance of more developed mythologies, but sees in them an elaboration under the influence of cults and priests.

Van Gennep's interest in totemism has undoubtedly caused him to give it a larger place in his treatment of the origin of tales than it merits. But one feels that he has his feet on the ground and that in so far as he goes he is a safe guide.

In agreement in many ways with van Gennep is Hans Naumann, who has presented his views in a series of essays entitled *Primitive Gemeinschaftskultur*.²³ He feels that the various forms of the folktale—myth, legend, hero tale, *Märchen*—are in their broad scope nearly the same. "They are, though by no means always very old, often made up in their fundamental motifs of narrative material which belongs to primitive man. They differ from each other above all in the manner in which they are definitely related to time and place or attached to a definite human, historic, or divine personality."²⁴ The differences in the forms of the tale are stylistic and are not based on deep psychological facts. All of them are founded on primitive beliefs which have at the same time been expressed in religious rites. Hence we find many traces of religious rites in folktales—sometimes almost hidden from view.

This last idea brings us around to a point which is so much insisted on that it seems central to Naumann's treatment. Primitive religious rites are most concerned with avoiding the malevolent return of the dead—not a "soul" but a dead man who still has it in his power to do harm. A great number of folk stories either contain some disguised ritual for avoidance of the dead or else they reflect the primitive belief concerning the dead. Hence the motif of the obstacle flight, in which magic objects are thrown back to retard or block off the ogre in pursuit, he says, is based on such a ritualistic procedure used to prevent the return of the dead. This ritual being universal, the tale motif is also universal.

From the belief about and fear of the dead among primitive men have come all sorts of ogre stories. The ogre is nothing but the dead, who has been variously imagined by different people. Whenever we have an ogre and a hero overcoming the ogre we have the dead and the protector against the dead. Fairies, dwarfs, nixes, brownies, and all ogres of any kind come from the belief in the living dead. Naumann brings together a huge number of tales of the Bluebeard and of the Hansel and Gretel types and, though he

²³ Jena, 1921.

²⁴ P. 61.

admits certain of them are borrowed from others, in general he insists that they are all the natural expression of the fear of the dead and of the desire to overcome their power.

Both Naumann and van Gennep are impressed by certain widespread beliefs and practices of primitive man. Each has taken one feature of primitive religion and has found it the most important psychological fact in the life of all primitive men. From these beliefs and practices they have attempted to explain the origin of certain identical tales in various parts of the world. They are both interested, therefore, in supporting the independent origin of analogous stories—that is, the theory of polygenesis of motifs—though neither denies diffusion.

The fundamental weakness of both theories is the assumption of much greater uniformity among primitive peoples than probably exists in fact. When we look at primitive society through one pair of glasses we see nothing but the interest in the totem animal and its relation to the tribe. The other glasses show the tribe living in continual fear of the return of dead men and expressing this fear by the invention of all sorts of supernatural creatures. No doubt both of these conditions can be found, but they are probably not both as important for the origin of folk narrative as the respective authors think.

One must not try to explain everything in primitive life by one simple formula—whether it be totemism, fear of the dead, or obsession with stars or dawn maidens. Doubtless certain motifs go back to each of these sources, and in spite of the emphasis of the studies of van Gennep and Naumann it is clear that these scholars recognize that this is true. But with them as indeed with Cox, Gubernatis, Ehrenreich, and all those who try to explain tales from one characteristic of primitive man, the reader is continually being persuaded that he has at last reached the exclusive fountainhead of all folk narrative.

Anthropological research for the past half century has resulted in a widespread and justified skepticism regarding the validity of most generalizations about primitive man. We are more and more aware that in spite of many resemblances in the culture of peoples outside the circles of modern civilized man, many of these resemblances are not real identities either from the psychological or historic point of view. Often they are merely the lack of certain elements of our civilization—a lack which they naturally share in common. Closer acquaintance brings knowledge of difference as well as of likeness. Better awareness of the geographical and historical factors makes us see a particular culture surrounded by others and being continually influenced by its neighbors. The statement, "Primitive man believes so and so" or "Primitive man acts thus and thus," ceases to carry the conviction which it did in the early days of Tylor's *Primitive Culture*.

The complex nature of the problem of the distribution of all culture traits,

including folktales, has been widely recognized of late years by many anthropologists and folklorists. Particularly has the intensive study of the American Indian tale during the last half century made it possible to speak of "primitive" tales with a knowledge of the facts impossible to scholars of an earlier generation. In the Pacific area also Malinowski²⁵ has clarified for us the myth-making process of a group of Melanesians whom he has studied with extraordinary intensity. Though Malinowski has a tendency to treat the tales of his Trobriand Islanders as if they had grown up entirely uninfluenced by stories of the rest of the world, he demonstrates beyond all doubt the fact that tales and myths are an extremely important element in the culture of an isolated island group. They are much more than mere entertainment: they are a part of the primitive man's science, medicine, religion, law, and agriculture. Malinowski's findings give no comfort to those who look for hidden meanings or fantastic origins for the folktale.

With all his qualities of thoroughness and clear-headed interpretation, Malinowski seems provincial in his point of view. The study of a world-wide phenomenon like the tale or the myth can hardly be made in total disregard of all places other than a single group of islands.

A proper grasp of the larger bearings of his study of primitive narrative is always shown in the work of Franz Boas.²⁶ He had the advantage of knowing exhaustively the tales of one tribe, the Kwakiutl, and he studied the relation of these tales to their life and culture. But he also knew the folklore of the rest of America, and in a measure, of the whole world. As far as folktales on the primitive level are concerned, he has perhaps uttered the final words of wisdom.

For one thing, he is convinced that no study of the origin of myths can be undertaken without a knowledge of the modern history of myths. Before one can speculate about what must have happened in far-off times and places, he should find what actually happens today in a particular tribe. "We have no reason," says he, "to believe that the myth-making processes of the last ten thousand years differed materially from modern myth-making processes" (p. 404).

Boas also minimizes the distinction between folktale and myth. "The facts that are brought out most clearly from a careful analysis of myths and folktales of an area like the northwest coast of America are that the contents of folktales and myths are largely the same, that the data show a continual flow of material from mythology to folk-tale and *vice-versa*, and that neither group can claim priority. We furthermore observe that contents and form of mythology and folktales are determined by the conditions that determined early literary art" (p. 405). In both cases he is convinced that the origins of the narrative are due to the play of the imagination with the events of

²⁵ Bronislaw Malinowski, *Myth in Primitive Psychology* (New York, 1926).

²⁶ *Race, Language, and Culture* (New York, 1940).

human life. But this play of the imagination in man is rather limited, so that there is every tendency to operate with an old stock of imaginative happenings rather than to invent new ones (p. 406).

Boas is convinced that mythologies did not begin with the simple observation of natural phenomena. He recognizes that these have a part now in many myths, but he is certain that it would be a mistake to interpret any specific myth as being due to such observations. The growth of myths and tales is extremely complex, and there have been all kinds of disintegration and accretion of foreign materials. The original form of any particular myth may be quite impossible to discover. And there is certainly no one explanation which will afford an easy answer to the general problem (p. 429).

Boas has some valuable observations concerning the relation of tale-types and motifs. Except in the European area where the tale-types have been rather clearly evolved, he finds that it is the individual motif which forms the object of dissemination and borrowing. Among most peoples these motifs combine rather freely. The forming of them into permanent clusters occurs among primitive peoples, but much more rarely than among Europeans. The individual motifs are likely to be much less realistic than the general plot of the tale, which is usually based upon the experiences of ordinary life (p. 399).

Finally, Boas was much interested in the study of style in folktales, and the relation of stylistic qualities to the tribe, and to the function of the particular tale in the life of the people. He recognized that this study was just beginning, and it is a fact that most of the actual efforts in this direction have been made by later scholars whom he has influenced.

By no means all the theoretical treatment which men have devoted to the folktale has been touched on in the preceding pages, for many points are brought up elsewhere in connection with appropriate aspects of the subject. Considerations of various folktale forms appear as introductions to the detailed factual discussion of each of these genres.²⁷ Specific problems of dissemination, collecting, and style are most conveniently handled in connection with the pertinent chapters on "The Life History of a Folktale," "Collecting Folktales," and "The Folktale as Living Art."²⁸

²⁷ Pp. 21, 188, 217, and 234.

²⁸ Pp. 428, 406, and 449.